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**CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING**

Wednesday, September 14, 2016

6:00 PM

**City of Huntington Beach
Civic Center Council Chambers
2000 Main Street
Huntington Beach, CA 92648-2702**

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Kreitz called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at which time the Pledge of Allegiance was said.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Antonio Benitez; Michael Couey; Nicolina Cuzzacrea; Roger Forest; Albert Gasparian; Bridget Kaub; Jay Kreitz; Jerry Moffatt; Roy Miller; Dick Thiel

MEMBERS ABSENT: Paul Burkart (excused); Amy Kwon (excused); J.D. Miles (excused)

STAFF PRESENT: David Dominguez; Janeen Laudenback; Charlene Gomez

PRESENTATIONS: None

MINUTES:

Motion: A motion was made by Kaub and seconded by Cuzzacrea to approve the minutes as written for the August 10, 2016 Community Services Commission meeting.

Ayes: Benitez, Couey; Cuzzacrea; Gasparian; Kaub; Kreitz; Miles; Miller

Noes: None

Abstain: Moffatt; Thiel

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:

Prior to public comments, Dominguez informed Commission that he believes the speakers will be addressing the late communication provided to Commission on the subject of proposed improvements for Central Park.

Juana Mueller described herself as dedicated to Central Park and the ongoing maintenance efforts and enhancements of the park. She referred to the late communication packet and discussed issues within Central Park, including the tree planting proposal, irrigation issues, and feels that safety is the number one concern at this time.

Shari Engle – A resident who volunteers at Shipley Nature Center and Central Park addressed the 2016/17 budget and strategic plan within the City. Ms. Engle stated that although safety is near the top of the goals on the strategic plan list, funding for the parks is near the bottom. She continued to discuss Central Park and its importance to the City as not only a local park, but a destination for tourists/surrounding community, and as revenue source through the Community Services Dept. She stated that revenues go into the General Fund with no funds set aside for clean-up and repair of the park. Park Maintenance falls under the purview of Public Works and has to compete with all other maintenance needs throughout the City, which are all underfunded. Ms. Engle stated that the City must act now in order to save Central Park.

Steve Engle – A resident and volunteer of Central Park reported on the current volunteer efforts in Central Park East, including that they are working in cooperation with the Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Sea & Sage Audubon Society, the Huntington Beach City Manager's Office, the City Attorney's Office, Community Services, Public Works, the Police Department, the Women's Club of Huntington Beach, the Tree Society, the Secret Garden Team and the Boeing Employee's Community Fund. These are all groups they are working with to help improve Central Park. Mr. Engle provided more detail of areas the groups have been working on including the removal of evasive plants, weeds and trash, and planting drought tolerant plants and building a dry stream bed. His group put out a call for volunteers and Mr. Engle reported that a group of mothers and small children from Santa Ana and Costa Mesa have volunteered to help in the area known as Susan's Garden. The gardens are educational, teaching children about plants, water conservations and the safe use of tools. He stated that the CIP for Central Park East was approved for \$200,000 and \$100,000 was approved for the Jack Greene Observation Rehabilitation area. He pledges that he and his group will continue to work to improve Central Park.

Jean Nagy – President of the Huntington Beach Tree Society reported on Central Park, invited Commission to come view the Urban Forest. She recommended a camping area for scout troops near the Urban Forest on a large flat piece of land. She described the possible amenities the scouts could enjoy and the potential as a revenue source. Ms. Nagy also reported that the Tree Society paid \$500 for trees and plants for Tarbox Park, which the City installed. However, because there is no money in the budget to maintain the plants and trees, she goes to the park every two days and weeds them herself. Ms. Nagy also suggested planting trees in front of the new Senior Center. She said it wouldn't cost the City any money, except for the irrigation, which is already installed.

David Pryor of Bolsa Chica Conservancy Consultants reported on a part of Phase One of Harriet Wielder Park project, which includes restoration, an interpretive center, park trails and passive use according to the General Plan. He provided further details on the project, saying that the funds are coming from OCTA mitigation money for the restoration. The EIR is going through an update and they are looking to begin April 1. The project will involve the community and volunteers. His organization has already begun to work with the Planning Dept., Community Services Dept., and briefing City Council.

Dominguez informed Commission that Mr. Pryor's comments are related to Item L-1, and if Commission wishes, they can ask questions at this time or wait for the item to come up on the agenda.

Commissioner Moffatt asked if the walkway around the wetlands will be continued to join Wieder Park. Mr. Pryor said that it's a complex issue and includes not only the County, but, private property and the oil companies. Mr. Pryor stated that It does connect at the Coast Hwy and will connect at Seapoint Street. He added that there is a signal at Talbert/Edwards that connects a finger of it to Central Park. Commissioner Moffatt spoke is in support of connecting the parks. Commissioner Moffatt will be meeting with Council Member O'Connell tomorrow and will let him know about Mr. Pryor's presentation.

Commissioner Miller asked if paths are dirt or paved, pedestrian walking or biking paths. Mr. Pryor said general plan within the EIR talk about 10 ft paved trails as requested by fire and safety in the 1992 EIR. For this phase, the restoration funds are for mitigation purposes only.

Commissioner Kaub asked if the tot lot, other play equipment areas and the grassy open area will be preserved. Mr. Pryor said yes, anything that is already in the park, including all plants and trees (except a few non-natives) will be preserved and added there will also plant some new native plants.

Chair Kreitz asked about a sign he saw regarding a future nature center. Mr. Pryor commented on the center, stating that it is millions of dollars and more funding is needed. Chair Kreitz also asked if the property from Palm to Cedar Point is part of Wieder Park or is that "oil land". Mr. Pryor said the property line is the center line of PCH (owned by a private owner) to Seapoint, and up to the heliport and residential complex are all part of Phases 2-5.

Chair Kreitz thanked Mr. Pryor for updating Commission on this phase of the Wieder Park project.

DIRECTOR/MANAGER ITEMS:

Dominguez provided follow up information on a few comments that were made during oral communications regarding the issues in Central Park. Regarding the watering/irrigation issues, along with all of the parks in the City, Central Park is subject to watering restrictions mandated by the State. Although restrictions have eased a little, they are still in place. Public Works is looking at a "purple pipe" system for reclaimed water. The City does not have such a system in place at this time. In the interim, they are getting "purple pipe" water from the Sanitation District and transporting it by water truck to irrigate some of the mediums around town. Areas are marked by a purple sign saying that it's non-potable water.

He added that Public Works is looking at their general maintenance of the park and are having a clean-up event on Saturday and Sunday, September 17 & 18, at the park. They are also finalizing the permit for the Jack Green camp area behind the Park Bench Cafe near Slater Ave. There are environmental controls in place that need to be

considered and maneuvered in the maintenance schedule so that trimming up and removal of trash can take place. Dominguez informed Commission that staff is going before City Council for a resolution for a trail approval grant. The grant will be used for one of the established trails in the Central Park near the entrance between Dog Park and the lake, leading up toward Urban Forest. The grant is to enhance the trail similar to the one at Bartlett Park. Enhancements will include landscape timbers along the side of the trail, DG and interpretive signage.

Referring to the public comments by Ms. Nagy, Dominguez said that the Scout's campground concept is something that can be brought forward to Commission. The City currently has the youth campground, which is the turf area located on the east side of the park between the Central Library and park maintenance area. The City's current policy is that it's only open to non-profit youth oriented organizations. The area Ms. Nagy referred to is high on the bluff and can give a real nature feel to the camping experience. This will bring in healthy activity to the area at night and deter inappropriate activity.

Laudenback expressed gratitude to the volunteers who have worked so diligently in Central Park saying that without their tireless efforts this type of conversation wouldn't be happening. She also thanked Dominguez and his team who are wrapping up projects like the rejuvenation of Bartlett Park. The projects at Bartlett are similar to those needed in Central Park, and with those project wrapping up at Bartlett, it will free up time for staff and Public Works to focus on Central Park. Laudenback also mentioned that the Strategic Plan includes an "adopt-a-park" plan, which can be brought to Commission in the next couple of months. That type of program can allow for volunteer groups to coordinate efforts for projects in parks like Bartlett and Central Park.

Commissioner Thiel asked if there are funds in the budget, grants, or funding from State or County, using Irvine's Great Park at El Toro as an example. Laudenback said that the City will apply for grants, as they did for the Bartlett Park project, but the main funding comes from development fund. Dominguez said the ongoing funds for maintenance are from developer fees (residential fees, park impact fees). The last two park bonds were in 2000 and 2002, but there is nothing on the horizon at this point. Thiel asked if anyone is developing and prioritizing a step-by-step plan for addressing the issues at Central Park, and if so, what are the costs. Dominguez said not at this time. The first steps will tie into Commissioner Miller's recommendation addressed under Item J-1.

Chair Kreitz reminded Commission that there is a Huntington Central Park Committee, and that should it be appropriate, they can address these issues.

PUBLIC INPUT MEETING: None

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS: None

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Worthy Park Update – Dominguez reported that the project is out to bid and bid period is set to close on September 30. Once qualified bidders are identified and a contractor is selected, staff is looking for the project to begin in late fall. Dominguez gave an overview of the project. Commissioner Kaub asked about the construction schedule and if it will affect the students at HB High School. Dominguez said that it's a fairly easy job. They are sensitive to the schools proximity and there will be as little impact on the school and the students as possible.

Team Room Update – Since the preparation of the agenda, the bid period has closed and unfortunately, no bids were received. The project will go out for re-bid after reviewing and possibly modifying the scope.

Rodgers Seniors' Center Update – Dominguez reported that staff requires additional time for preparation of this item, and hopes to bring it before Commission at the November meeting.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS: None

COMMISSION BUSINESS:

Chair Kreitz turned the floor over to Commissioner Miller to discuss the recommendation he submitted as Item J-1. Commissioner Miller referred to article provided by Shari Engle. He said he was shocked by what he read and had visited the park twice since reading it to observe the issues, including the homeless encampments. Commissioner Miller stated that Central Park is the flagship park and is highly used for its amenities. He compared it to Bartlett Park, saying Bartlett has been improved since the citizens complained about the conditions and would like to see the same for Central Park. Commissioner Miller said his biggest concerns are the encampments he came upon when walking what he thought were trails within the park on one particular visit. He discussed the park ranger program that was eliminated in 2002 and the need to reinstate the position.

Commissioner Couey said that he visits the park a couple times per week and sees the same issues. He also assisted with the cleanup of Bartlett Park and knows the difficulties of the clean up process. Commissioner Couey feels that the City is struggling with the large homeless population as a whole and that even if the parks are cleaned up, they will return. He said that the park needs security, and although he is for the park cleanup efforts, he doesn't feel it will resolve the problem.

Commissioner Cuzzacrea suggests establishing a budget and providing security in the park to help with the homeless population.

Commissioner Kaub thanked Commissioner Miller for his recommendation to Commission, and she thanked Ms. Engle for the work she and her group do and the voice they give to the parks. Although she agreed with Commissioner Couey, she also feels that baby steps are effective and that working from both sides of the issues can help the situation. She said that presenting the issues to the Huntington Park Committee for prioritizing is a good start.

Commissioner Moffatt said that increasing the budget is necessary and recommends that Commission look at how they can get the budget increased as they also address the issues such as security in the parks. He agrees with Commissioner Kaub that “bookending” the issues is the best method of attack in regards to accomplishing what needs to be done. Commissioner Moffatt feels that economics are paramount in this situation.

Commissioner Forest agrees with the issues, but would like to see more numbers. He feels that it's a priority. He also likes the park ranger idea. He suggests acting on it now before the situation gets worse.

Commissioner Thiel asked if the police are aware of the situation and have they tried to remove them. Laudenback stated that they are aware and a task force was created. Police are doing their best to clear the encampments. She said that the homeless issue is a City-wide challenge. Homeless don't go away when a park is cleaned up, they go to another park. Discussion continued on removing foliage as a possible deterrent. Dominguez said there are also environmental restrictions to be considered. Permits have to be obtained, which Public Works is working on. The process must include experienced City staff because the thinning has to be done in a particular manner. Dominguez went on to describe the process of “limbing-up” the vegetation. Additionally, he stated that publishing of public notices has to take place in order to remove people's belongings from the parks.

Commissioner Gasparian feels that all of these topics are a reflection of what has happened over a long period of time and needs to be addressed. With the complexity of the issues, he said that prioritizing and funding are needed in order to chip away at both the minor and major issues.

Commissioner Benitez said that as a new Commissioner, he is looking forward to his assignment on the Huntington Central Park Committee and helping to prioritize these issues.

Chair Kreitz thanked Commissioner Miller for bringing the item forward and thanked the citizens who brought it to the attention of Commission. He described some of his visits to the park and what he has seen. Chair Kreitz said that it's difficult because the park has a lot of natural areas and you don't want to cut too much in fear it will change the aesthetic of the park. He too feels that a budget is needed and prioritizing is key. He feels that if Committee comes back with a detailed priority list and support from the community, that more funds will be available. Chair Kreitz turned the topic over to Commissioner Miller for his formal recommendation.

Commissioner Miller thanked the HB Tree Society for all that they do. Because they brought it to his attention, he looked beyond the beaten paths in the park.

MOTION: Commissioner Miller moved that Commission direct the Huntington Central Park Committee to address the condition of Central Park, and to use the article by Shari Engle as well as the HB Tree Society proposal. Commissioner Kaub seconded the motioned. All in favor.

Chair Kreitz asked Dominguez to read the names of those Commissioners on the Huntington Central Park Committee. The Committee consists of Benitez, Couey, Gasparian, Kaub and Miles, with Chair Kreitz as ex-officio.

Commissioner Couey suggested that Committee explore funding as well, and gave examples of fundraising ideas.

Commissioner Thiel believes that the community would support a "Save the Park" fund.

Chair Kreitz called for the vote.

Ayes: Benitez; Couey; Cuzzacrea; Forest; Gasparian; Kaub; Kreitz; Moffatt; Miller; Thiel

Noes: None

Absent: Burkhardt, Kwon, Miller

COMMISSION AND STAFF COMMENTS:

Dominguez stated that the Central Park Committee process will follow the Brown Act open meeting requirements. Anyone who would like to speak may do so during the public comments. The goal of Committee will be to come up with recommendations to bring back to Commission as a whole. Depending on the type of recommendation it may need to go before City Council for approval. Dominguez also reminded Commission that there is a Central Park Master Plan that has to be considered. Refurbishing and restoration are okay, but adding anything new to the park would require a different process. He asked Commission to keep in mind where the funding sources come from. The park fund can't be used for maintenance items, and, therefore, are not available for a lot of the issues at Central Park. The park will be competing for Public Works general funds alongside streets, lighting and other projects. However, there may be other sources of funds through donations as Commissioner Thiel mentioned.

Chair Kreitz asked Dominguez to talk about the Master Plan at the next meeting so that Commissioner is aware of what it entails.

Commissioner Thiel asked if there is someone on staff who is knowledgeable about the plants and vegetation and what can be removed. Dominguez said yes, staff is aware of protocols and should be involved early.

Commissioner Cuzzacrea feels that this is an emergency situation and asked if there is a contingency plan in case such for funding. Dominguez said that reserve funds are for catastrophic emergencies such as earthquake or flood, not for undesirable situations.

Laudenback said that the Strategic Planning Session is scheduled for January and a good avenue for this type of issue. It's a public meeting where Commissioners and citizens are welcome to make comments about where their priorities lay within the City. The Strategic Plan is used in budget planning as well, so if Committee has recommendations by that time, it could be memorialized in the document. Laudenback stated that with regard to the emergency situation, if there is a danger to the community, Police will handle it immediately.

Moffat said that the dividing line for safety is a thin line. He's glad the City is aware of the situation and the issues can be mitigated before something happens. He also commented about the gray water that is being pumped out of the sand area, and urges someone at the City to make contact and look at the drawings. He said that there are abandoned lines that go all the way to Long Beach and can potentially be relined for water.

Commissioner Forest asked Dominguez if there is an update on the directional signs on the trail just north of the pier. Dominguez said nothing at this time. However, he will provide an update to Commissioner Forest through email or at the next meeting.

Couey asked Dominguez for a status on the "no feeding the ducks" signage. Dominguez replied that some signage is posted at various parks, and new signage is going up next week at Carr Park. The ordinance changed recently to state that there is no "feeding" of the wild animals, whereas before, it stated "no harming".

ITEMS DISTRIBUTED TO COMMISSION: None

ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business, Chair Kreitz called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Kaub moved for adjournment and Commissioner Moffatt seconded the motion. All in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 7:22 pm.

Submitted by:

David C. Dominguez
Secretary
Community Services Commission

By: Charlene Gomez
Recording Secretary